

December 7, 2009

Media, PA -- Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) issued the following statement in response to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administration's signing, after reviewing the available science, the EPA's finding that greenhouse gases, including emissions from on-road vehicles, threaten public health and the environment:

"Today's signing of EPA's findings serve as yet more impetus for Congress, through passage of meaningful climate change legislation, to provide the President with a clear path on how this Nation should address greenhouse gas emissions," said Congressman Sestak. "Doing nothing is just not an option. We owe it to the next generations to confront the serious effects of these emissions. I continue to call for ambitious renewable energy standards and the bill I helped pass in the House this year is an important step toward a cleaner and safer environment, as well as toward the job-creating green economy we need. It is now as important as ever for members of the Senate to stand up and call on their leadership to move on passage of meaningful legislation in that chamber."

Congressman Sestak was one of the first Members of Congress to express support for the climate change bill framework put forward by the Chairman Henry Waxman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and U.S. Climate Action Partnership, a coalition of businesses and environmental groups. As part of that effort he co-sponsored and continues to support legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen the green economy by creating a strong national renewable energy standard.

EPA's announced endangerment finding follows a 2007 Supreme Court decision that the EPA, by law, must examine whether it should regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. Earlier this year, the EPA announced its initial endangerment findings and opened a 60-day public comment period. Today, the Administrator of the EPA affirmed those findings.

This determination requires EPA to take future regulatory actions, such as finalizing the greenhouse gas standards proposed earlier this year for new light-duty vehicles. Climate change legislation as passed by the House and proposed in the Senate would complement these findings by providing a statutory framework for the reduction and regulation of greenhouse gas emissions.

The EPA announcement follows below:

EPA: Greenhouse Gases Threaten Public Health and the Environment

*Science overwhelmingly shows greenhouse gas concentrations at unprecedented levels due to human activity*

WASHINGTON – After a thorough examination of the scientific evidence and careful consideration of public comments, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced

today that greenhouse gases (GHGs) threaten the public health and welfare of the American people. EPA also finds that GHG emissions from on-road vehicles contribute to that threat.

GHGs are the primary driver of climate change, which can lead to hotter, longer heat waves that threaten the health of the sick, poor or elderly; increases in ground-level ozone pollution linked to asthma and other respiratory illnesses; as well as other threats to the health and welfare of Americans.

"These long-overdue findings cement 2009's place in history as the year when the United States Government began addressing the challenge of greenhouse-gas pollution and seizing the opportunity of clean-energy reform," said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. "Business leaders, security experts, government officials, concerned citizens and the United States Supreme Court have called for enduring, pragmatic solutions to reduce the greenhouse gas pollution that is causing climate change. This continues our work towards clean energy reform that will cut GHGs and reduce the dependence on foreign oil that threatens our national security and our economy."

EPA's final findings respond to the 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision that GHGs fit within the Clean Air Act definition of air pollutants. The findings do not in and of themselves impose any emission reduction requirements but rather allow EPA to finalize the GHG standards proposed earlier this year for new light-duty vehicles as part of the joint rulemaking with the Department of Transportation.

On-road vehicles contribute more than 23 percent of total U.S. GHG emissions. EPA's proposed GHG standards for light-duty vehicles, a subset of on-road vehicles, would reduce GHG emissions by nearly 950 million metric tons and conserve 1.8 billion barrels of oil over the lifetime of model year 2012-2016 vehicles.

EPA's endangerment finding covers emissions of six key greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride – that have been the subject of scrutiny and intense analysis for decades by scientists in the United States and around the world.

Scientific consensus shows that as a result of human activities, GHG concentrations in the atmosphere are at record high levels and data shows that the Earth has been warming over the past 100 years, with the steepest increase in warming in recent decades. The evidence of human-induced climate change goes beyond observed increases in average surface temperatures; it includes melting ice in the Arctic, melting glaciers around the world, increasing ocean temperatures, rising sea levels, acidification of the oceans due to excess carbon dioxide, changing precipitation patterns, and changing patterns of ecosystems and wildlife.

President Obama and Administrator Jackson have publicly stated that they support a legislative solution to the problem of climate change and Congress' efforts to pass comprehensive climate legislation. However, climate change is threatening public health and welfare, and it is critical that EPA fulfill its obligation to respond to the 2007 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that determined that greenhouse gases fit within the Clean Air Act definition of air pollutants.

EPA issued the proposed findings in April 2009 and held a 60-day public comment period. The agency received more than 380,000 comments, which were carefully reviewed and considered during the development of the final findings.

Information on EPA's findings:

<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/endangerment.html>

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, the Congressman was the first Director of Deep Blue, the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the Global War on Terrorism. He served as President Clintons Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Congressman Sestak is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

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